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ABSTRACT

Selected by Department of Education staff to initiate a resource exchange effort, a core group of 19 representatives of educational agencies and organizations was invited to attend this conference intended to increase individual and group knowledge of the resources and services available from their organizations. A pre-conference mailing included a form for participants to develop an abstract of each organization and a set of guidelines to assist them in this task. Data from these abstracts will form the basis of a notebook describing educational resources and service groups in the state, and a portion of the conference agenda was devoted to sharing these abstracts, along with participant presentations on the services and resources of their organizations. This report provides summaries of the presentations, the conference agenda, a framework for discussing dissemination activities, a description of a communications/resource sharing game, a participant list, and a conference evaluation. (RAA)

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IDAHO DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE

"Dissemination as Communication Linkages to Exchange Resources"

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M. Margaret Thorne

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Idaho Department of Education
Boise, Idaho
November 2, 1979

Sponsored by
the Idaho Department of Education
In cooperation with
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

An Action Report

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
DISSEMINATION PROGRAM
710 S.W. Second Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

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Introduction

The Idaho Dissemination Conference represented a significant advance in the efforts of Idaho educators to further school improvement through resource identification and increased communication among key educational personnel in the state.

Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Education and held in Boise, Idaho on November 2, 1979, the conference had as its theme, "Dissemination as Communication Linkages to Exchange Resources." More than a dozen key agencies and organizations involved in education in the state were represented.

Participants had the opportunity to renew acquaintances with others involved in education in Idaho and to establish contact with additional individuals and organizations. Indications of the wish to maintain contact were evident as participants queried one another about the activities of their organizations and in their establishment of a task force to facilitate communications among the group and to plan a similar conference within a year's time. Participants also passed a resolution naming the Idaho Department of Education as the agency they wish to continue assuming a leadership/coordination role in furthering communications and resource sharing in the state.

Background

Prior to describing conference activities in detail, it may be helpful to provide some background information on how the conference came to be held, especially for readers of this document who were not directly

involved in the planning efforts.

The Idaho Department of Education, recognizing the value of interagency collaboration and sharing, particularly in an era of scarce resources, has worked closely with Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Dissemination Program to create a system for resource exchange in the state and the region. Department of Education staff were therefore very eager to join with the Dissemination Program and the other states in the region in what has come to be called the Northwest Regional Dissemination Configuration Project.[1]

Supported by the National Institute of Education, the Configuration Project has made possible a resource sharing conference in each of the states. It is also providing support for the development of notebooks which describe educational resource and service groups in each state. Idaho's conference and forthcoming resource notebook, therefore, have a dual purpose: While the conference and the notebook are organized around the particular concerns of Idaho educators, they are also intended to support the eventual development of a regional resource sharing network.

Department of Education staff selected an appropriate core group to bring together for purposes of initiating the resource exchange effort and invited them to attend the conference. A pre-conference mailing announced the conference goal as being to increase individual and group knowledge of the resources and services available from the organizations represented. This mailing also provided each recipient with a blank form for developing

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[1]Together, the states of Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington comprise the Northwest Regional Exchange, coordinated by the NWREL Dissemination Program. The Configuration is a special project of the Exchange.

an abstract of his or her organization and a set of guidelines to assist participants in this task. A major portion of the conference agenda was devoted to sharing these abstracts, along with participant presentations on the services and resources of their organizations.

Conference Activities

Charles Brown, Coordinator of Dissemination at the Idaho Department of Education, opened the conference by welcoming participants and offering a brief review of the conference goals. Brown stressed the potential benefits of resource sharing across organizational boundaries and encouraged participants to assist in the development of communication linkages which can facilitate resource exchange.

Brown passed out copies of a draft version of the Idaho Resource Handbook and discussed with participants its development and proposed uses. Idaho, like other states involved in the Configuration project, plans to utilize its state handbook of resource and service providers in two major ways:

- As a "ready reference" document which will be made available to educators throughout the state
- As a study tool for Department of Education staff and other planners to use in analyzing services and resources presently available and planning for more efficient allocation of them to the state's 115 school districts

Brown opened a discussion of educational dissemination by pointing out that many concepts of dissemination exist and asked participants to generate and submit a brief definition of dissemination. He then gave participants a brief overview of the Configuration project, indicating how

the Idaho Dissemination Conference and state resource mapping effort mesh with other Configuration activities.

Virginia Thompson, Director of the Dissemination Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory was then introduced by Brown. Thompson discussed the Configuration Project and the support role played by the NWREL Dissemination Program in assisting the state and the region to further their educational dissemination efforts. Major points in Thompson's presentation included:

- The role of the Dissemination Program is a support role, not a policymaking one. Policy is the province of the educational agencies in each state.
- A major challenge currently facing states in the region and the nation is the need to engage in resource exchange, especially in an era of scarce resources, even though organizations and individuals within them are understandably protective of their time and territory.
- Resources, in this context, include time, talent, materials and money.
- Findings from recent studies on the subject of resource exchange networks can assist members of the educational community to learn about and develop plans for resource sharing.
- The NWREL Dissemination Program is organized into "state consultant teams" which provide support and assistance to those involved in educational dissemination, resource exchange and communications networking in each state.

- Conference participants are invited to call upon the Northwest Lab and the Dissemination Program for technical assistance and professional support.

Brown continued the discussion of dissemination by offering an overhead presentation, a series of handouts and some explanatory statements on dissemination concepts. Included in the presentation was the definition of dissemination developed by the national Dissemination Analysis Group and ratified by participants at the National Dissemination Forum in 1977. The conference handout concerned with this definition may be found in the attachments to this report. Brown also shared with participants the Idaho Department of Education model for conducting dissemination activities and stressed the Departments' wish to include groups represented at the meeting in the resource base used by Department staff.

The next portion of the conference agenda was devoted to a learning game in which participants were organized into two-person teams, arranged back-to-back, and engaged in collaborating on a construction paper design according to a specific set of rules. The purpose of the exercise, in addition to changing the conference pace and providing an opportunity for participants to get to know one another better, was to illustrate some of the factors which can help or hinder communications between individuals attempting to work together on a project. During the discussion following the game, participants identified several communication pitfalls they had encountered and cited ways in which these pitfalls sometimes occur in their real working environments. Among the communication issues surfaced during the game, participants noted inattentiveness on the part of listeners, the tendency to work on assumptions even though these may not be shared, insufficient feedback and lack of trust.

An expanded discussion of the trust issue followed, with participants citing concerns common to most organizations and individuals at the outset of a resource sharing effort. Chief among these is the concern that one's own organization and its work may be regarded as unnecessary or irresponsible if energy is being put into networking with others in order to share and be recipients of others' sharing.

The next major agenda item involved participants in sharing the abstracts they had developed to describe the work of their organizations and hearing one another's presentations about those organizations. The participant list included in the attachments to this report provides a listing of the presenters and their organizational affiliations.[2] The presentations began during the morning session and continued after participants returned from lunch.

Doug Hammer of the State Board for Vocational Education facilitated the next portion of the conference, which was concerned with "Identifying Strategies for Effective Communication and Resource Linkage Between State Agencies and Allied Organizations." Again, several kinds of activities and issues with relevance to the real work situations of professional educators were highlighted by engaging the participants in a game which called for resourcefulness, creativity, goodwill and cooperation within short timelines.

It seems worthwhile to outline the tasks called for by the game, as participants found these microcosmic scopes of work to be very telling as

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[2] Presentations were not made by staff of the Department of Education nor by NWREL staff, as the activities of these groups were shared earlier in the conference program and detailed in the draft resource handbook presented to participants.

regards their actual professional lives and their individual styles of participation in collaborative endeavors. A description of the game can be found in the attachments to this document.

René Pino, Dissemination Program consultant for the state of Idaho, shared with conference participants some methods they might wish to consider as they approach developing an educational resource exchange network in the state. This presentation, which drew heavily on recent networking scholarship, included information on factors which can interfere with developing networks and those which can facilitate such development. Among the guidelines presented for enhancing, developing and deepening educational resource sharing networks are:

- Believing and accepting that resources are limited
- Acting consistently with this belief by:
  - Informally seeking out others concerned with education
  - Deliberately involving others in defining and redefining themselves as resources
  - Bringing together individuals of different specialties and interests to consider exchanging their strengths and assets
  - Providing an arena for people to express their concerns and problems and to identify their self-interest in dealing with them

Of the many factors involved in successful networking, it is especially important, according to networking research, for potential network members to expand their view of themselves and one another as resources. In this way the resource base members perceive as being available to them expands, and this perception assists them to overcome those factors which might otherwise slow network development or halt it altogether.

Pino's presentation was followed by a group discussion of the feasibility of resource sharing among Idaho educators. Though opinions differed on the likelihood that sharing of financial resources, in particular, would be accomplished in the near future, participants did agree that Idaho schools stand to benefit by the efforts of planners and policymakers to develop resource sharing strategies. With these potential benefits in mind, participants engaged in a discussion, led by Charles Brown, of next steps for the group to take in furthering the development of a resource exchange network in the state. Suggestions included:

- Convening a statewide meeting of educational leaders to explain and "promote" the resource sharing concept
- Having the Department of Education serve as a catalyst for future resource sharing and communications efforts
- Conducting "information fairs" which would be held contiguously with major state education meetings to familiarize those in attendance with the state resource base
- Providing all Idaho educators with access to the state resource handbook

Suggestions were also offered for future inclusions in the state resource handbook.

The suggestion concerning the Department of Education's role as a coordinator/catalyst in the resource sharing effort was formalized as the group passed a resolution supporting continued DOE leadership in this effort. Participants also supported the creation of a four-person task force to facilitate communications among the group and develop plans for a meeting, to be held within a year's time, involving this group and

additional educational leaders in the state. Task force members include:

Charles Brown, Idaho Department of Education
Bedford "Buck" Boston, Southeast Idaho Teacher Center Consortium
John Jensen, Boise State University
Kathy Puckett, Idaho Office of Energy

Formal and informal evaluations indicated that the Department of Education-sponsored conference was highly responsive to the needs and priorities of the state educational leaders who attended, and that the activities, products and strategies with which the conference was concerned represented appropriate and timely approaches to furthering educational improvement in Idaho.

ATTACHMENTS

A Conference Agenda

B A Framework for Describing Dissemination Activities

C Communications/Resource Sharing: A Game

D Participant List

E Conference Evaluation

ATTACHMENT A

IDAHO STATE CONFERENCE
November 2, 1979
"Dissemination as Communication Linkages to Exchange Resources"

Agenda

8:45	Coffee Registration
9:00 to 9:30	Overview Introduction Objectives Application Charlie Brown Historical information context for conference Virginia Thompson Defination- Dissemination Utililization Diffusion Charlie Brown
9:30 to 10:15	Making the Pieces Fit Charlie Brown
10:15	Break
10:30 to 11:45	Sharing of Resources Discuss Directory of Resources and Share Presentations by participants with the group Charlie Brown & Doug Hammer What's Missing? Building a Network of Resource Exchange Rene Pino
11:45 to 1:00	Lunch
1:00 to 2:30	Identify Strategies for Effective Communication and Resource Linkage Between State Agencies and Allied Organizations Doug Hammer
2:30 to 2:45	Break
2:45 to 4:15	Debrief Next Steps Future Possibilities Evaluation Rene Pino & Charlie Brown

A FRAMEWORK FOR DESCRIBING DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

While it would be possible to come up with many different ways of describing communication and dissemination efforts, it seems most useful for purposes of this paper to rely on the four *levels of dissemination* identified by the Dissemination Analysis Group (DAG) sponsored by the U. S. Office of Education (USOE). The four are defined as follows:

Spread: the *one-way* casting out of knowledge in all its forms: information, products, ideas and materials.

Exchange: the *two-way* or *multi-way* flow of information, products, ideas and materials as to needs, problems and potential solutions.

Choice: the facilitation of rational consideration and selection among those ideas, materials and outcomes of research and development, effective educational practices and other knowledge that can be used for the improvement of education.

Implementation: the facilitation of adoption, adaptation, installation and utilization of proven practices.

ATTACHMENT C

COMMUNICATIONS/RESOURCE SHARING: A GAME

1. Each individual generates four strategies which he or she believes would further communications and/or resource sharing among organizations involved in education in the state. Each item is written on a 3x5 card.

2. The facilitator collects the cards, mixes them and passes three to each participant at random. Leftover cards are laid out on a table placed in a central area.

3. Participants are asked to take the cards they received and move about the room, trading for the communications and resource sharing ideas they feel would be most effective. Participants may bargain with other individuals for cards or make exchanges with the collection on the table, but each person is to maintain a collection of three cards.

4. Participants are asked to form "coalitions" of 3 to 5 persons. (The size of the coalitions may vary depending on the size of the total group.) Each coalition is required to come to agreement on the three "best" strategies for furthering communication and resource sharing, choosing from the idea cards held by coalition members. The method for coming to agreement on the strategies selected must also be determined by each coalition.

5. Each coalition synthesizes its three chosen strategies into one.

6. Each coalition gives itself a name, generates a "philosophical" statement about its reason for being and creates a bumper sticker slogan for itself.

7. Each coalition shares the results of its work with the total group.

ATTACHMENT D

PARTICIPANT LIST

Boston, Bedford (Buck)	S.E. Idaho Teacher Center Consortium 1300 Kimberly Road Twin Falls, ID 83301	(208) 734-6911
Campbell, David	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 710 S.W. 2nd Avenue Portland, OR 97204	(503) 248-6879
Cotton, Kathleen	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 710 S.W. 2nd Avenue Portland, OR 97204	(503) 248-6876
Grimes, Phil	State P.T.A., Inc. 620 North 6th Street #6 Boise, ID 83702	(208) 344-0851
Hammer, Doug	State Board for Vocational Education 650 West State Street Boise, ID 83720	(208) 384-2932
Jensen, John H.	Boise State University Department of Teacher Education & Library Services 1910 University Drive Boise, ID 83725	(208) 385-3602
Liehe, Chuck	State Board for Vocational Education 650 West State Street Boise, ID 83720	(208) 384-3214
Moore, Gayle	Idaho Education Association P. O. Box 2638 Boise, ID 83701	(208) 344-1341
Puckett, Kathy	Idaho Office of Energy Statehouse Boise, ID 83720	(208) 384-3800
Reisch, Darrel	Nampa Senior High School 203 Lake Lowell Avenue Nampa, ID 83651	(208) 466-8921
René Pino	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 710 S.W. Second Avenue Portland, Oregon 97204	(503) 248-6871

PARTICIPANTS cont....

Schraer, Judy	State Department of Education 650 West State Street Boise, ID 83720	(208) 384-3940
Silver, Shirley	S O I C C 650 West State Street Boise, ID 83720	(208) 384-3705
Spofford, Arvin	Franklin Elementary School 5007 Franklin Road Boise, ID 83705	(208) 345-6400
Thompson, Barry J.	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation 1501 McKinney Boise, ID 83704	(208) 384-3390
Thompson, Virginia	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 710 S.W. 2nd Avenue Portland, OR 97204	(503) 248-6837
Walter, Gaye	Idaho State Library 325 West State Street Boise, ID 83720	(208) 384-2150
Wilson, Serve	Idaho Association of School Superintendents P. O. Box 890 Mountain Home, ID 83647	(208) 587-4483
Brown, Charlie	State Department of Education Len B. Jordan Office Building 650 West State Street Boise, Idaho 83720	(208) 384-3814

ATTACHMENT E

"DISSEMINATION AS COMMUNICATION LINKAGES TO EXCHANGE RESOURCES"

November 2, 1979
Assessment Information

Were the following Goals met through todays activities?

Gained Little 1 2 3 4 5 High Awareness

1. 3.75 Increased awareness about Idaho resources, programs and services.

2. Strategies for effective communication and resource linkage were identified.

x=7 YES
0 NO
Comments not sure/initial strategies--do not yet form a coherent plan

3. Roles were clarified for communication and resource exchange.

x=6 YES
x=1 NO
Comments somewhat/this did not seem to be a major conference purpose

Rate the activities of the day by the presentor.

Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Good (write number in blank)

4.13 Overview
4.25 Historical Information
3.88 Definition
4.38 Communication Game
3.88 Role Clarification
4.13 Handbook Presentation (1)
3.84 Handbook Presentation (2)
3.86 Identifying Services and Questions
4.13 Strategies for Effective Communication
4.0 Overall Rating of the Days Activities

Eight respondents

GROUP MEETING ASSESSMENT

1. Goals of the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 ×4 5 Good

Unclear	Clear
Diverse	Shared by all
Conflicting	Endowed with enthusiasm
Unacceptable	

2. Participation in the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 4 ×5 Good

Few dominate	All get in
Some passive	All are really listened to
Some not listened to	Open, lively discussion
Several talk at once	
Several interrupt	

3. Leadership of the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 4× 5 Good

Needs for leadership not met	A sense of direction
	Leaders allowed to emerge as needs arise
Group depends too much on me or a few	Everyone free to volunteer to lead
No direction	
No leadership	

4. Decisions made during the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 ×4 5 Good

No decisions made	Good decisions
Decisions made to which I feel uncommitted	Everyone felt part of decision-making process
Bad decisions made	People committed to decisions

5. Your feelings during the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 ×4 5 Good

I was unable to express my feelings	I freely expressed my feelings
	I felt understood
My feelings were ignored	I felt support from others
My feelings were criticized	

6. Organization of the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 4× 5 Good

It was chaotic	Very well organized
Too tightly controlled	Flexible enough so we were able to influence it
Very poorly done	
I felt manipulated	All went smoothly

7. Productivity of the meeting

Poor 1 2 3 ×4 5 Good

Didn't accomplish much	Got a lot done
No useful ideas emerged	Very fruitful
It got us nowhere	Something will come of this session

Six respondents